

# Montana SCHOOLS

Summer 1996

Newsletter of the Montana  
Office of Public Instruction  
Nancy Keenan, Superintendent  
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## Historically speaking 2

The history of character education in the United States goes back to colonial times.

## OPI staff departs 3

Co-workers bid farewell to valued colleagues who are either retiring or moving on to other employment.

## Dispatches 4

Updates from OPI specialists.

## And More . . .

## PLEASE RETURN

# Kids on Character meetings continue

Montana students discuss what sort of people they want to be

**N**ice. Someone you can count on. A good listener. A good sport. Smart. Cool. Popular.

These are some of the words Montana students would like their friends to use in describing them.

### Kids ask to be heard

From Glendive to Libby, from Billings to Havre, the message from students is consistent: they want to be people of good character, and they need help from adults, schools, and communities.

"It's not rocket science," says State

Superintendent Nancy Keenan, who created the Kids on Character project in partnership with the Montana Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) and the Montana Broadcasters Associa-



Butte Students tell Nancy Keenan what they need to be people of good character

nearly 600 Montana students in grades 3-8 discuss character issues.

### To be or not to be "cool"

According to Keenan, the vast majority of these students want to be thought of as responsible, respectful, caring, intelligent, thoughtful people. Many of them, however, face a formidable obstacle: having these qualities is not considered "cool" among people their age.

"The gap between what students want to be and what their peers consider 'cool' is enormous," Keenan said. "Many students, particularly the older ones, are telling us it's 'cool' to be mean to others, to tease others, to fight, to get bad grades, to be

'tough,' to make life miserable for their teachers. The students get very quiet when they see these words written down next to their lists of what they want said about them. The discrepancy shocks them."

### Let's redefine "cool"

Changing the concept of "coolness" for young people could play a key role in maintaining the safety of our schools and communities, Keenan said.

"Where it is cool to be responsible, respectful, hard working, and caring, you have a safe, civil community," she said. "Students need adult role models and heroes, but we must also look to the youth culture itself."

### Students spread the word

According to Keenan, the Kids on Character partnership will be working with young people

**"Kids want good role models, and they want adults to listen to them — really listen."**  
—Nancy Keenan

tion. "Kids want good role models, and they want adults to listen to them — really listen."

By the time school closes for the summer, Keenan and members of the PTSAs will have listened to

## Basic premises of character education

(from *Character Education in U.S. Schools: The New Consensus*, 1996, Character Education Partnership)

- ✓ In a free and democratic society, every citizen has personal and civic responsibilities as well as inalienable rights.
- ✓ Only responsible people are capable of sustaining a free and democratic form of government.
- ✓ Good character is not formed automatically; it is developed over time through a sustained process of teaching, example, learning, and practice.
- ✓ Developing good character in children is primarily the responsibility of families. It is also the shared responsibility of communities, schools, religious institutions, and youth service groups.
- ✓ Creating civil and caring school communities is indispensable to developing good character in students and to good academic teaching and learning.
- ✓ Effective K-12 character education: (a) helps make schools more civil and caring communities; (b) reduces negative student behavior such as violence, pregnancy, substance abuse, and disrespect for teachers, parents and peers; (c) improves academic performance; and (d) prepares young people to be responsible citizens and productive members of society.

**"The gap between what students want to be and what their peers consider 'cool' is enormous."**  
—Nancy Keenan

during the summer to create public service announcements on character. Sponsored by the Montana Broadcasters Association, Montana students will write and create PSAs for radio and television that feature "kids talking to kids" about responsibility.

(Continued on page 2)

Second Class  
POSTAGE PAID  
Helena, MT 59620  
USPS 601690

## Message from Nancy Keenan

### Focus on the good, not just the bad

In the past several months, I have used this column to express the concerns that many of us share about teaching children the elements of good character. As I have been visiting with groups of students from around Montana for the *Kids on Character* project, I have been impressed by how consistently students express their desire to be honest, responsible, caring, and respectful. In short, they want to give their best for their friends, their families, their schools and their communities.

We know students want to learn to be good people. As educators, parents, and supportive adults, we welcome these statements from our young people. The question then becomes "How do we create a learning environment that will foster the qualities of good character in our children?"

Students tell us to focus on the good things that they do. They question why stories about gangs show up as page-one news while positive stories about student achievement are tucked away on the back pages of the local newspaper.



They also lament that a whole group or classroom of students may be reprimanded for the disrespectful behavior of a few students. If they come to school ready and willing to learn, they are frustrated by the actions of other students who are disruptive of the classroom environment. Students fear that adults perceive the "bad apples" to be typical of all students.

Teachers also express their frustration with the distractions and disruptions that a small group of students with "conduct disorders" can create. The disruptive student is not necessarily a student with learning difficulties or disabilities, so does not fall under the category of special education. Examples of disruptive behaviors include talking back, hitting and calling one another names, refusal to follow school and classroom rules, refusal to listen to adults, and shortened attention spans.

As we move toward the legislative session, I will be looking to discuss—with students, educators, legislators, and community representatives—ways that schools can ensure the safety of our public school classrooms and improve the quality and integrity of teaching and learning in our regular education classrooms.

By the time the 1995-96 school year draws to a close, I will have met with students in 12 Montana communities through the *Kids on Character* project. I would like to express my gratitude to these students for sharing and participating in an honest dialogue about the social and educational challenges facing students and for offering their suggestions for responding positively to these challenges. I always enjoy the opportunity to learn from the young people of this diverse state. It renews my hope for the future.

Thanks for all your hard work this year! Rest, recuperate, and enjoy your summer.

Nancy Keenan

### Kids on Character Meetings

(Continued from page 1)

ity, respect, and other traits of good character.

#### Kids' Council on Character

The Broadcasters Association will also sponsor a statewide Kids' Council on Character this fall. About 20 Montana students in grades 3-8 will be selected to participate in the council. Council members will meet to discuss what youth need in order to be people of good character and to share their ideas with statewide school, media, business, and policy leaders.

Meetings with kids continue  
In the meantime, *Kids on*

Character meetings continue across the state. As of this writing, the *Kids on Character* "road show" has been to Kalispell, Libby, Glendive, Miles City, Missoula, Great Falls, Bozeman, Butte, and Billings. Next in line are Havre, Lewistown, and Helena.

Each of the three-hour student meetings is followed by a town meeting, where Keenan, PTSAs, members, and student participants present the students' findings and recommendations to adult community members. ■

—Sanna Porte Kiesling, OPI  
Communications Director

## Character education: a historical view

The consensus is overwhelming: Americans want public schools to teach ethics and good character. Officials of both major political parties want it. So do business groups, educators, and parents.

### Character, a community activity

Schools alone should not be saddled with the burden of teaching honesty, responsibility, and the other traits of good character. It's a job that begins with families and is shared by the entire community. Schools do have a role to play, however. In fact, character education has been part of the mission of public education in this nation from its beginning.

### A brief history

The 1996 publication *Character Education in U.S. Schools: The New Consensus* offers a history of character education in the U.S. Here is a condensed version.

In America, developing good character in young people was essential to the educational mission from the colonial period through the first part of the 20th century.

Since the mid-1950s, however, the focus on character education became greatly reduced. This change can be tied to a recognition that education in the moral domain is highly complex. In addition, as immigration brought more diversity to the U.S. population, some parents began to object to education in the public schools that was incompatible with their own beliefs. The Supreme Court began to uphold such complaints on the basis of the First Amendment.

Uncertain of what they could and could not legally do, many school officials began to shy away from moral education altogether as a way of avoiding controversy and potential litigation.

### Communities get involved

Concerns about growing discipline problems, violence, and a perceived decline in ethical behavior, rekindled interest in character education. In the 1980s, several communities throughout the U.S. began a process that led to the reintroduction of character education in their local schools.

In Baltimore County, Maryland, for example, educators convened community leaders to discuss those positive values that were generally shared and important enough to be taught in public schools. In St. Louis, Missouri, business leaders, alarmed that high school graduates were deficient in personal attitudes toward work as well as academics, created a community-based partnership to promote personal responsibility in area schools.

### Character education takes hold

The idea of character education, while still controversial among some groups and some educators, began to take hold.

In 1992, two key gatherings on character education took place. In March, the Wingspread Conference was held in Wisconsin. The goal was to urge education

leaders to give greater attention to character education. In July 1992, the Josephson Institute of Ethics convened educators, character education experts, and leaders of youth organizations in Aspen.

### The Aspen Declaration

This group issued the Aspen

Declaration on Character Education, which acknowledges that:

- ✓ The present and future well-being of our society requires an involved, caring citizenry with good character.
- ✓ People do not automatically develop good character, so efforts must be made to help young people develop good character.
- ✓ Effective character education is based on core ethical values which form the foundation of democratic society: respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, caring, justice and fairness, and civic virtue and citizenship.

### National coalitions created

Two national, nonprofit, nonpartisan coalitions dedicated to promoting good character in young people grew from these two meetings. One is The Character Education Partnership, Inc. Another is the Character Counts! Coalition.

Today, local communities and schools are joining forces to promote and implement character education in rapidly growing numbers. ■

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# OPI staff bid a fond farewell to departing co-workers

As Montana's high school seniors accept their diplomas and move across the dais into their futures, so too are many valued and longtime OPI employees moving on into other jobs or retirement.

Through their dedication and hard work, each of these people contributed much to schools and education in Montana.

The following paragraphs were contributed by people who worked closely with each of the following OPI "graduates."

## Fanny Gordon

Since she retired last summer, Fanny—and Fanny's Christmas treats—have been sorely missed this past year in OPI's Adult and Vo-Ed division.



Fanny Gordon

In her 25 years of service to vocational education, Fanny never once applied for a job in another unit. She ran the operations of many a meeting, conference, or special event from both her desk and her home. Fanny donated many hours to the Future Farmers of America (FFA) and other vocational student organizations during her tenure at OPI. Blue FFA blood runs through her veins.

## Gregg Groepper

Gregg retired from his position as the Assistant Superintendent for Operations at the end of February. In 1975, after one year teaching math in the Helena school system, Gregg stepped into Montana state government where he occupied positions of increasing responsibility. He came to OPI in 1989 and immediately set about moving OPI into the technological age and updating the accounting and reporting procedures used by schools and



Gregg Groepper

## Duane Jackson

This spring we wished a fond farewell to Duane Jackson. He officially started with OPI in January 1972, but most of Duane's co-workers feel he had always been with the office.

Duane takes with him into retirement a big chunk of corporate memory. He can remember the places, dates, and participants of years' worth of the comprehensive professional development workshops he organized. For many years, Duane was OPI's foreign language specialist and, most recently, he was the office's team leader in the area of school improvement. Duane performed many vital functions for OPI, including his work on the School/Community Assistance Process, Project Excellence, and its predecessor, the Basic Quality Education program. Always an advocate for excellence in education, Duane was a sounding board for OPI staff. His opinion was sought by teachers and administrators throughout the state.

## Sanna Porte Kiesling

Sanna has worked in the Montana State Superintendent's office as a communications specialist since 1989. For the first six years she was the editor of *Montana Schools*, a job to which



Duane Jackson

within the office. During Gregg's tenure, OPI developed both the MAFFAIRS and METNET systems which allow schools and educators to submit reports and communicate electronically. Both these systems help bolster the Montana education community by providing an efficient and relatively easy method of transmitting information and ideas.

In March Gregg accepted a position as Director of Montana Energy Share. We wish Gregg luck in his new position.

she lent her considerable talents as a writer, editor, photographer, design/layout artist, and diplomat. In addition, Sanna prepared columns for many of Montana's weekly newspapers and press releases about educational events and success stories in our public schools.

Working with Sanna has been a great pleasure. She is creative, intelligent, talented, gentle but persuasive, respectful and appreciative of a diversity of opinions, open in her communications, a good listener, and lots of fun! Her enthusiasm for outdoor adventures has involved her co-workers in some memorable hikes and river floats which made for wonderful story telling in the aftermath. We will miss Sanna and wish her well as she creates her future.

Sanna leaves OPI to become communications director for the Montana Education Association.

## Bob Parsley

Bob began his career as OPI's Indian Education Specialist in 1973, and, after 23 illustrious years, he will be missed tremendously. Bob's untiring efforts to improve the teaching and learning of Native American students are well known around the state. He is being honored at a retirement luncheon at OPI on May 28. Accolades, gifts, and best wishes are to be presented by State Superintendent Nancy Keenan and Bob's colleagues at OPI. We wish him the best in a well-deserved and hard-earned retirement, but we'll really miss him, too!



Bob Parsley

## Leonard Lombardi

Leonard is one of the most effective vocational program specialists ever to work at OPI. He gave over and above the professional requirements of his posi-

tion. His work was a passion, not just a job. His love for students and Agricultural Education stretched his resources—

both time and personal income—to the limit. Leonard always said, "If my job does not allow me to work directly with kids, then it is time to call it quits." His house, with his wife Ruth's blessings, was a halfway station to many a FFA student and agriculture education teacher.

OPI will miss Leonard, but agriculture education and FFA will suffer the greatest loss.

## Gary Lee Watt

Gary has been at OPI since 1978, working his way up from a school food service specialist to director. Through the years, he has seen the program grow and change in many ways. Many times those changes have been difficult, but Gary would always consider the total picture. He always kept the needs of the office foremost in his mind, and worked hard to do what was best for kids.

Gary now plans to spend his days dowsing for water, prospecting for gold and sapphires, and catching up on household repairs. He is also looking forward to enjoying time with his children and eight grandchildren.

Gary's knowledge and his understanding and supportive manner will be missed by personnel in the field and by the School Food Services staff. ■

Five other longtime employees, Fran Briggeman, Roger Fuchs, Peggy Rost, Betty Smith, and MaryJane Spiroff, left OPI within the past year. Because of budget constraints, many of the positions held by these staff members will be held vacant for a time.

## Dispatches

"Dispatches" are updates by Office of Public Instruction staff. Staff members may be reached at the phone numbers listed or by writing them at the Office of Public Instruction, P.O. Box 202501, Helena, MT 59620-2501.

Division of Academic and Professional Services  
Linda Peterson, Administrator

Professional Development  
June Atkins, Specialist  
444-3664

Everyone a Winner...READ!  
The 1996 family reading program

is on its way. A collaborative effort of OPI and the Montana State Library with support from the Montana Education Association and the Montana State Reading Council, *Everyone a Winner...Read!* promotes student and family reading for learning and pleasure.

The project provides a manual of ideas and activities for teachers and librarians. Manuals will be mailed to librarians at all elementary buildings, county superintendents, supervising teachers, and public libraries.

### Summer Reading Calendars

A calendar of reading activities for the summer months has been mailed to every elementary school, county superintendent, and super-

vising teacher. Please consider making copies for your students. Students completing the activities (which include reading at least three books each month) will receive a family reading certificate and a surprise.

### Summer project for teachers

During the summer months you might make plans to start a teacher study group or a student book club in the fall. Do take time to read both professionally and personally.

### Professional development

• June 10-11 or June 13-14, 1996, Shelby, MT—WISH (When Individual Success Happens) Workshop: All children should have opportunities for success. Cost is \$150, which

includes over \$60 in materials and 12 renewal credits. Contact Rosemary Battleson, 616 Oilfield Ave., Shelby, MT (434-2251).

• Aug. 12-15, Polson, MT—Literacy Learning in the Classroom: Sponsored by the Polson School District, this course will help teachers learn how to help students become competent and enthusiastic lifelong readers, writers, and learners. Cost is \$300; two graduate-level credits are also available. Contact Elaine Meeks (883-6329; emeeks@digisys.net).

• Aug. 19-21, Winnipeg, Manitoba—4th Rupertsland: Contact Marilyn Raman (204-667-7130).

Check the calendar on page four for the dates of the reading conferences coming up this fall.



Leonard Lombardi

## National Diffusion Network

Patricia B. Johnson, Specialist  
444-2736  
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National Diffusion Network (NDN) programs work because they are research-based, proven, cost-effective and transferable.

### Program Highlight

*Image Making Within The Writing Process* is an innovative, arts-based literacy program which integrates children's visual imagery at every stage of the writing process. Using art to suggest stories results in more richness in the writing and the illustration. For grades 2-6.

*Facing History Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior* uses the history of 20th-century genocide to teach about the meaning of human dignity, morality, law, citizenship, and behavior. For grades 8-11.

### Upcoming trainings in NDN programs:

- Project CRISS, Certified Trainer Workshop: June 26-28 in Kalispell.
- Project CRISS, Teacher Workshop: July 11-13 in Havre.
- Project Success, Language Arts, Level I: June 24-26 in Billings; July 15-17 in Glendive and Great Falls.
- Project Success, Language Arts, Level II: July 17-19 in Glendive and Great Falls.
- Project Success, Art Level I: June 20-22 in Havre; July 24-26 in Great Falls.
- Teaching Activities for Language Knowledge (TALK): June 1 in Helena.
- Talents Unlimited: June 17-19 in Missoula.

### NDN Funding

After more than 22 years of success, federal funding for NDN has been eliminated. As a result, money for replication and state assistance is no longer available. In order to implement NDN programs, the programs and adopting schools will need to seek other funding sources.

### Future of NDN Programs

These exemplary programs will continue to exist and to be as fine as ever! They will still be available to schools.

### NDN Program Directory

In order to learn about the programs currently in the NDN, please request a copy of the directory of NDN Programs. I have a copy for the person responsible for curriculum in each district. For more information, please call me.

## Social Studies

Janet Andrew  
444-1951  
jandrew@opi.mt.gov

### Video available

Schools can now purchase the award-winning video program *I'll Ride That Horse! Montana Women Bronc Riders*. Produced at KUSM/Montana Public Television, the film documents the inspiring stories of

some of Montana's best known women bucking horse riders who performed from the late 1920s to the late 1950s in rodeos from the Rocky Mountains to Madison Square Garden, and from Spain to Australia.

Each woman recalls how she defied social custom to compete as part of a respected and popular minority among rough stock rodeo riders. Their stories are illustrated by archival still photos, historic motion pictures of 1930s rodeos, and contemporary action film.

The film unearths a neglected aspect of Montana and western history, the legacy of women ranch hands and rodeo performers. It is ideal for Montana history, U.S. history, social studies, and athletics classes on the junior high and high school levels to stimulate awareness of gender roles, western women's history, and women as early professional athletes.

### Further questions

VHS tapes, 27 minutes long, can be purchased for your school collection, along with a 10 page study guide. For more information call Doris Loeser (586-2858).

## Division of Health Enhancement and Safety

Spencer Sartorius, Administrator

### Traffic Education

Curt Hahn, Specialist  
444-4432  
chahn@opi.mt.gov

### Traffic education reimbursement

Please submit your reimbursement requests for all high school traffic education courses that were completed between July 1, 1995, and June 30, 1996. We need them no later than July 10th. Schools will receive their reimbursements in August at a rate of approximately \$90 per pupil.

### New MTEA president

Dennis Davenport, Colstrip High School traffic education teacher, was elected to a three-year term as president of the Montana Traffic Education Association (MTEA). The professional association for Montana teachers of young novice drivers, MTEA has a membership of over 150. Dennis will lead MTEA through a period of transition as members implement the new traffic education curriculum and move into their new role as driver license examiners. In addition, Dennis plans to place a strong emphasis on "parent implemented" Graduated Driver Licensing.

### 40th ADTSEA Conference

The annual conference of the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA) will be held in Grand Junction, Colorado, at the Hilton Hotel on August 2-8, 1996. Workshop topics include teaching strategies, parent participation research, driver improvement, and the impact of traffic educators administering the state driver license exams.

A variety of adventure tours are also planned for participants who are incorporating the conference into a family vacation.

### Advanced driver education

If you are interested in earning one semester credit by attending one of this year's Advanced Driver Education Workshops, please contact me.

### Eliminate those blind spots

This method was devised by George Platzer, an engineering consultant and (I think) a genius. I use this approach and can say it



## CALENDAR

17-19: Project Success, Glendive—Chere Ring, 655-3115  
17-19: Project Success, Great Falls—Diana Knudson, 733-2081  
18-19: CSPAC Meeting, Helena—Peter Donovan, 444-0301  
18: Budgeting Workshop, Great Falls—Karen Mulcahy, OPI, 444-4401  
23: Budgeting Workshop, Miles City—Karen Mulcahy, OPI, 444-4401  
24: Budgeting Workshop, Billings—Karen Mulcahy, OPI, 444-4401  
24-26: Project Success, Great Falls—Diana Knudson, 733-2081  
25: Budgeting Workshop, Butte—Karen Mulcahy, OPI, 444-4401

### August

25-27: 8th Annual Conference on Services to Children & Adolescents with Emotional Disturbance & Their Families, Great Falls—Susan Bailey, OPI, 444-2046  
26-27: MT Conference on Developmental Disabilities, Butte—Perry Jones, 444-5662

### September

12-16: Big Sky Interpreters Conference, Great Falls—Melody Domph, 892-3532  
15-16: MANDT Training, Butte—Susan Bailey, OPI, 444-2046  
19-21: 1996 IRA Regional Reading Conference, Winnipeg, Manitoba—Marilyn A. Raman, 204-233-8734  
26-28: 23rd Plains IRA Regional Reading Conference, Bismarck, ND—Joyce Hinman, 701-258-5384

### October

2-4: 1996 Partners in Teaching & Learning Fall Conference, Billings—Gwen Smith, OPI, 444-5660  
7: Five Valleys Reading Conference, Missoula—Jennifer Christensen, 273-6720 or June Atkins, OPI, 444-3664  
17-18: MEA\MFT Instruction and Professional Development Convention, Helena—Eric Feaver, MEA, 442-4250  
17-18: Montana State Reading Conference, Great Falls—June Atkins, OPI, 444-3664

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